

CEOs and MDs, don't panic!

 By [James Moffatt](#)

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If you are a communications agency leader and you had time to reflect on your 2015 business strategy over the holidays, you might have wanted to stick your head in the sand. A simple SWOT analysis can send you straight for the whiskey - and if it doesn't, you aren't ahead of your game.

The fragmentation of spend and media has left many core channels of income increasingly under threat. "The internet of things" will further challenge your relevance if you are not deeply connected to the current zeitgeist.

Therefore, if you do stick your head in the sand, your business is doomed.

Many agencies have disappeared off the landscape this side of 2010. Some have been absorbed into larger companies, their leaders choosing an easy road to redemption*. Some have withered to a third in size, spiralling downwards as their reducing talent pool leads to further client losses. Some have simply gone bust. In amongst this there are a few shining examples of fantastic growth, such as Joe Public, but they are the exception.

Being integrated is no longer an advantage. Everybody is claiming it.

It goes without saying that our jobs are to help our clients build brand equity and increase market share and sales. We exist to solve business challenges and this can't be done properly unless you have the capacity to be completely media agnostic. You need to be engaging with your target audience where they are most engaged. I for one have replaced my TV time with iPad time. I hope it's not frying my pancreas.

Spoilt for choice

Most digital agencies are now moving into ATL, BTL and design. The same is true of "traditional" agencies moving into digital. None of this is news and has been happening for some time. But when you get to actually break it down, there is a dizzying spread of specialities that agencies can venture into.

To deliver a fairly simple digital solution requires expertise in UX and UI, front- and back-end development, project management and strategy. Another example that appears simple to conquer is social media. Not so, as it requires staff to have the requisite skills to interpret and implement social media strategies and content creation, in addition to delving deep into their clients' business challenges.

All these different characters have highly differentiated personalities. Supporting this all, you need to get alignment to your

culture regardless of character differences. Therefore, in order to deliver on one of dozens of marketing "categories", you will need a variety of skills per category. And in order to be best of breed, you need to hire, develop and retain people who raise the quality of the conversation and are exceptional at what they do.

Get the right people, look after them - and grow them

Since skills = people, you may be wondering how the hell you will be able to compete without the workforce of Google.

So this is where I implore you not to panic. In our experience, the following views have provided us with 70% of the solution. Whether you are a small or medium-sized agency, employ people with intellect, talent and curiosity. You need curious staff to build a learning culture. Make sure you forge into new strategically important areas (for you and your clients) with talent that will ensure the highest degree of success.

Support the learning and growth of your staff and make damn sure that when they leave you, they are far better off than when they arrived.

This New Age of Marketing requires a level of bravery. Not always having the answers initially is not always a bad thing. Most of the development in the industry occurs through curiosity and learning. This is the age of knowledge sharing. With strong and bold clients, we are able to be the mavericks the jaded consumer craves.

Business is changing fast - last year is already obsolete. So fight for great clients and the right talent. You are guaranteed to succeed.

I for one am proud to be part of an industry that never settles. We have enough information sharing and talent around us to lead our clients, not the other way around.

**I don't view successful agencies that were sold in this category. I'm referring to entities that were absorbed or merged with multiple entities.*

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